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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [IR](#) [AORC](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN SEEKS CHAIR OF IOM EXCOM

Classified By: IO DAS MLagon per E.O. 12958 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraphs 11 and 12.

Summary

12. (C) On June 7, 2006, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a non-UN intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration, is holding its annual Executive Committee (ExCom) meeting. The Iranian Deputy Permanent Representative has volunteered to be Chairman of ExCom. As yet, no other Member State has put itself forward for this Chair position, nor has any publicly objected to Iran's candidacy. Given Iran's continued defiance of the international community over its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, the USG does not believe it is the time for "business as usual" with the Iranian regime. Therefore, the Department is opposed to Iran's candidacy and is attempting to recruit an alternative volunteer to serve as ExCom Chair. To this end, representatives of the U.S. Mission in Geneva will be contacting their counterparts at your host country's mission there to attempt to enlist their candidacy. Department seeks your assistance in doing same with appropriate contacts within your host country's foreign ministry.

International Organization for Migration; Executive
Committee

¶3. (U) IOM is a non-UN intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration and to providing humanitarian assistance to refugees, displaced persons or other uprooted people. At present, IOM has 116 Member States and its 2005 program budget exceeded USD \$1.1 billion. The United States was instrumental in the creation of IOM, has been a member since the organization's inception in 1951, and is its largest donor.

¶4. (U) IOM ExCom is an annual meeting whose general function encompasses the review and consideration of the policies, activities and budget of IOM. The United States is a member of ExCom, in addition to the following 32 other States: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Chile, Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. Any State can volunteer to be Chair of ExCom (i.e. not based on regional representation/slates). Historically, Chair elections have been uncontested and accepted by consensus at the beginning of the meeting. The level of U.S. representation at the meeting is Counselor/First Secretary from the U.S. Mission in Geneva. Representation at this level is also typical of other Permanent Missions in Geneva.

Iran Seeks ExCom Chair; U.S. Not Running

¶5. (U) According to IOM Administration, the Iranian Deputy Permanent Representative has volunteered to serve as Chairman of ExCom. As yet, no other Member States, including the United States, have put themselves forward for the position or indicated their intent to do so. In addition, no Member State has publicly objected to Iran's candidacy. During informal consultations with representatives of the U.S. Mission in Geneva, some Permanent Missions expressed concern with Iran's candidacy but indicated they would not run for the position.

¶6. (C) Given Iran's continued defiance of the international community over its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, the USG does not believe it is the time for "business as usual" with the Iranian regime. As such, the Department is opposed to Iran's candidacy and is attempting to identify and recruit an alternative candidate for ExCom Chair.

¶7. (SBU) Under the present circumstances, the United States has chosen not to put itself forward for Chair because permanent members of the UN Security Council have traditionally not sought governing body positions for UN and other intergovernmental bodies such as IOM.

Need to Recruit Alternative Candidate

¶8. (SBU) Recruitment of an alternative candidate for ExCom Chair poses a significant challenge: Iran's candidacy is already well known among Member States, and any State that now runs clearly would be perceived as doing so to oppose Iran. Moreover, the Department further expects some resistance from States that may argue that the United States is politicizing a humanitarian body. While we certainly recognize in general the importance of keeping politics separate from humanitarian issues, Iran's positions relative to its nuclear weapons program, its

continuing role as the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism, its interference in Iraq, and its aggressive regional policies are so reprehensible as to warrant action that would isolate it from selective involvement in the international community. Despite these challenges, the United States' best option is to secure an alternative candidate for ExCom Chair so as not to confer credibility or legitimacy on Iran within this international forum. As an ExCom representative State in good standing, your host country is a possible candidate for Chair.

¶9. (C) PRM A/S Sauerbrey contacted IOM's Director General (DG) on Wednesday, May 24, to express grave concern over Iran's candidacy and the potentially serious damage that could result to IOM's reputation within the international community and to its good standing within the USG if the Administration were unable to secure an alternative candidate for ExCom Chair. She further urged the DG to use his considerable influence with Member States to manage this issue. The DG responded that Iran is "a relatively good player" on migration issues and in that sense behaves "like a normal Member State" but acknowledged "the problem of Iran" given its ties to terrorism and its pursuit of a nuclear weapons program. The DG agreed to "see what (he) can do", further commenting that a USG demarche on ExCom representative States would be very helpful in this regard.

¶10. (SBU) At Department's request, in the coming days, representatives of the U.S. Mission in Geneva will contact their counterparts at your host country's Permanent Mission there with the following message:

-- The Executive Committee of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will meet in Geneva on June 7. As the first order of business, the thirty-three representative Member States will be asked to elect a Chairman and vice Chairman.

-- It is our understanding that Iran has informed the IOM Administration that it intends to seek the Chairmanship. We are gravely concerned by the prospect of Iran chairing the meeting of a governing body of this organization, and trust that you share those concerns.

-- We believe that the election of Iran to any post would not be in the best interest of the organization, and would reflect poorly on Member States. In addition, we are concerned that it would validate Iran's belief that it can participate selectively in the international community.

-- We encourage you to express your reservations with regard to Iran's candidacy; to cooperate with Member States seeking an alternative candidate to serve as Chair of ExCom; and to consider seeking the position yourself.

If asked:

-- The United States has chosen not to put itself forward for Chair. As the United States is a permanent member on the UN Security Council, we generally do not seek positions of this type. Furthermore, as the IOM DG is an American, some might think it would be inappropriate.

-- While the United States certainly recognizes in general the importance of separating politics from humanitarian fora, Iran's positions relative to its nuclear weapons program, its continuing role as the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism, its interference in Iraq, and its aggressive regional policies are so reprehensible as to warrant action to prevent its pursuit of a legitimate role within the international community.

¶11. (U) Action Requested: Drawing on the above points, the Department seeks your support in communicating this message to the appropriate contacts within your host country's foreign ministry or other government ministry in

a further attempt to enlist an alternative candidate for ExCom Chair. Given that ExCom is less than 2 weeks away, Department appreciates your response to this request by COB Wednesday, May 31.

¶12. (SBU) In addressing the above concern, please note the following informal feedback your host country provided to representatives of the U.S. Mission in Geneva and/or past official roles they have held within IOM governing bodies:

-- Germany: German officials have indicated they consider ExCom a marginal body with a limited role in a lesser international forum in Geneva, and do not oppose Iran as Chair. Furthermore, they have stated that the German Ambassador is currently occupied with the Human Rights Council so lacks capacity to assume the ExCom Chair role.

-- Guatemala: 2005 ExCom Chair; has expressed no intent to run again in 2006 but is eligible to do so.

-- Hungary: 2005 and 2006 Chair of Sub-Committee on Budget and Finance (SCBF), another IOM governing body; may be too focused on SCBF to assume Chair at ExCom.

-- Italy: Italian officials have expressed reservations about Iran as chair, but stated they would not run themselves. They further posited that perhaps if Iran were given a position of responsibility it would behave more responsibly within the international community.

-- Japan: has been contacted by the Administration regarding Iran's candidacy but reserved its opinion; contacted the U.S. Mission and asked for the U.S. reaction before notifying Tokyo.

-- Thailand: 2004 and 2005 ExCom Vice-Chair. Thai officials are focused on an upcoming royal visit and have stated they will not run. In addition, they reportedly made an agreement with Iran last year not to run for this year's Chair.

¶13. (U) Please contact Maura Nicholson, Program Officer, PRM/MCE, at 1-202-663-3344 or at NicholsonMJ@state.gov, with additional questions.
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